

# Aztec Tennis Reporter

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**Aztec Perry Durning, 1960s Player, Coach, Hailed for Discoveries of Gold, Silver, Metals**



**TIME ZONES:** Perry Durning in 1966 season, left, and in 2010.

Perry Durning never played a prospector in a movie.

Humphrey Bogart never played Aztec tennis.

But they have a lot in common: They both found gold in Mexico.

Actor Bogart, the suspicious, down-on-his-luck drifter turned prospector, found gold in the 1948 movie, *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, shot in Durango.

"That's exactly what I do," Durning said with a chuckle, "I ride around on horses and look for the big bonanzas that everybody else missed!"

Durning helped coach the 1964-65 Aztec men's tennis team and played on the 1966 and 1967 squads. In recent years, he has found millions of ounces of gold and silver in Durango and elsewhere in Mexico with his prospecting partner, Bud Hillemeier.

Their four biggest finds, beginning in 1994, led the Prospectors

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## Aztecs Revive but Fall in Mountain West Finals

San Diego State's men's and women's tennis teams roared back from early season losses to contend for the Mountain West Conference Championship, then lost matches by razor-thin margins to both teams from TCU in the tournament finals in Las Vegas.

Riding a four-match winning streak, the men had scored 4-0 victories over Air Force and UNLV, before losing to TCU, 4-3, in the championship finals, ending the regular season at 13-13. The score reversed a 4-3

Aztec victory earlier in the season.

The Aztec women fell in their tournament final match to the TCU women by the same score, 4-3, marking an unusual dual matchup of the same schools facing each other in the men's and women's finals of the Mountain West Championships.

Both TCU teams lost in the first round of the NCAA playoffs.

Before their loss, the Aztec women, seeded fifth, had surged to the tournament finals with victories over BYU, 4-2, and a lop-sided upset of top-seeded Utah, 4-1.



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**SWEETSPOT:** Aztec Julia Trunk hits forehand. The SDSU women's team came within two points of winning the Mountain West title.

In the regular season, the women struggled to compile a 7-5 record in the early weeks of the campaign before suffering four consecutive losses. The Aztecs had just upset 48th ranked St. Mary's (4-3) when their losing streak began. They fell in 4-3 matches to 50th-ranked Pepperdine and 59th-ranked UNLV, then dropped decisions to Brigham Young and 49th-ranked Utah by identical 5-2 scores.

Entering the conference tournament, the Aztec women were ranked 75th in the nation. They rose to 58th after their run to the final. Aztecs Julia

Trunk ranked 64th in the nation in singles and Alicia Aguilar 92nd.

"We have really had a pretty good year," said women's coach Peter Mattera, noting that his team badly lost a lot of close ones on the road.

Mattera had said he saw the conference tournament as wide open and then he proved it by coaching his team to the final round despite a fifth seeding. Champion TCU was seeded sixth.

In a deciding final match,

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**EYES ON PRIZE:** Aztec Achim Vladimirschii (formerly Ceban) stares at ball for backhand. In his final regular season match as a senior, he defeated Luca Barlocchi of UNLV, 7-5, 6-2, earning decisive fourth point in a 4-3 victory.

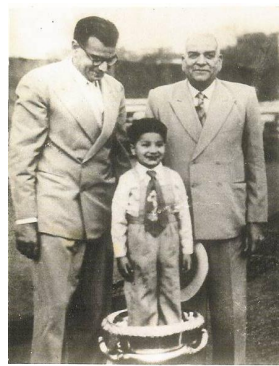
This tale begins with two photographs: In one, a young boy stands inside a huge trophy cup. His father appears beside him, smiling down at him. The father is the national grass court champion of India. Beside them is a beaming grandfather.

In the second photo, the boy is in his 20s. He is holding the cup. It is 1972 and he has just won the national championship of India.

The characters in this generational drama are Sri L P Misra, an Indian Railways executive; his son Sumant Misra, the 1946 and 1953 Indian national champion, and grandson Gaurav Misra.

Today, Gaurav Misra teaches tennis and directs the tennis center at Columbia University. His son, Nick, has taught tennis, played on the pro tour, and

## Fathers and Sons: Tennis Bonds



**DYNASTY:** The Misras of India share love of tennis.

coached a college team.

They symbolize the bond between generations. Tennis isn't the only place where this happens, but because it can be played at any



age, it allows its players to feel the timelessness of their relationship.

Three father-and-son tennis pairs I know are the Misras, the Redondos and the Weinbaums.

Aztec Skip Redondo

coached SDSU tennis from 1977 through 1988. Today, he directs tennis and teaches at the La Costa resort. Aztec Ryan Redondo won All-American honors in doubles at SDSU. Today, he is assistant Aztec men's coach and holds an SDSU masters degree in religious studies.

Sam Weinbaum is a practicing New York lawyer in his 80s. His son Willie Weinbaum is an ESPN producer. They play doubles both days almost every weekend.

Sam has fast hands. He was a basketball star in high school. Willie has an outfielder's anticipation and the endurance to cover vast stretches of the court.

They hate to lose. I relish playing them. It's a front-row seat on the bonds of love in tennis.

John Martin

## An Aztec's Trans-Atlantic Quest to Keep Public Courts Open and Free

When she moved from San Diego to the British Isles five years ago, Aztec Shelley Susman found a cause: free tennis for all, especially juniors.

Susman, who played on the women's team at San Diego State in 1983-87, was a single working mother transplanting herself and her two small children to what the English-speaking world calls the mother country

On arrival, she discovered a class system in tennis. People with money could pay and play, but unlike the taxpayer-supported free system in her native Southern California, the United Kingdom was a crazy quilt of restricted, open, dormant, or neglected courts.

Ordinary Britons who could not afford fees or lessons were often out of luck and oblivious to the traditions of the New World.

Tennis for Free, a group of Britons working to lower the barriers, found an ally in Susman, who embarked on a public campaign to open up thousands - perhaps tens of thousands - of tennis courts to men, women and youngsters who simply wanted to play.

Ironically, when Susman returned to San Diego two years ago, she found a fraying system of free public courts under pressure to privatize or go out of existence.

"I think taxes in general should cover the use of courts in parks," she said. "There is a 'tennis tax'...which is totally



**PUBLIC ISSUE:** Aztec Susman pushed cause in newspapers.



unfair," she wrote in an email. "In...the other parts of the parks, grassy areas, picnic areas, (users) aren't charged..."

But desperate for cash, counties find themselves pondering and imposing fees. The dream of free access, especially for the underprivileged, seems a relic of another age.

"There doesn't seem to be a uniform approach within counties, states, either here or in the UK," Susman said.

To foster an awareness of the need for free or inexpensive tennis, Susman has formed a non-profit foundation, Tennis 4 Anyone. Its small board of tennis-savvy members includes teaching pros Ed Collins and Ben Press.

In a model program, Susman and fellow Aztec Paige Patridge Farmer now teach and help operate tennis courts in San Marcos on a non-profit basis. Susman said she looking to the San Diego Park and Recreation Department to adopt some of the foundation's ideas and serve as a catalyst in helping spread the concept in California and beyond.

For her past efforts, she has won praise from the U.S. Professional Tennis Association (See Honors for Aztec Teammates, ATR 45, January, 2010, Vol 11, No 1).

If she persists in America, it will be worth staying tuned. As her British cousins found out, Aztec Shelley Susman, whose mother, Karen Hantze Susman, was Wimbledon singles and doubles champion in 1962, doesn't give up.

To contact Susman: Shelley@s1s10s.com

# Where Are We Now? The Great Search (1922-2010) Continues

## Aztec Perry Durning Wins Mining Award

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& Developers Association of Canada to honor them with the 2010 Thayer Lindsley Award for international mineral discovery. Their plaques were presented in Toronto in March at a banquet attended by 800 members and guests of the association during the group's annual convention, attended by 21,000 delegates from more than 100 countries.

The Thayer Lindsley award is the most prestigious international award for geologists involved in mineral exploration, Durning explained in an e-mail to ATR.

A previous winner, Larry Buchanan, told fellow explorers that Durning and Hillemeier made these discoveries the old-fashioned way, by eschewing the comforts of hotels and restaurants, by hiking ungodly amounts of kilometers through rough country, by camping each night wherever sunset found them, and by using geological insights they themselves developed.

The association said their discoveries are expected to yield nearly 7 million ounces of gold and more than 900 million ounces of silver. It called a finding in 2002, at La Pitarrilla, one of the most significant silver discoveries in the last decade.

In *Treasure of Sierra Madre*, the paranoid prospector Fred Dobbs (Bogart) asks an outsider: "Can you help a fellow American down on his luck?"

He should have asked Perry Durning.

"There's one thing you learn in tennis -- and actually in all sports -- is that you need the persistence and determination to be successful," said Durning in a telephone interview.

"When I was playing for San Diego State," he said, "I never believed that there was an opponent that I had that was so good that I couldn't beat him."

Durning said he has adopted that



Hillemeier



Bogart

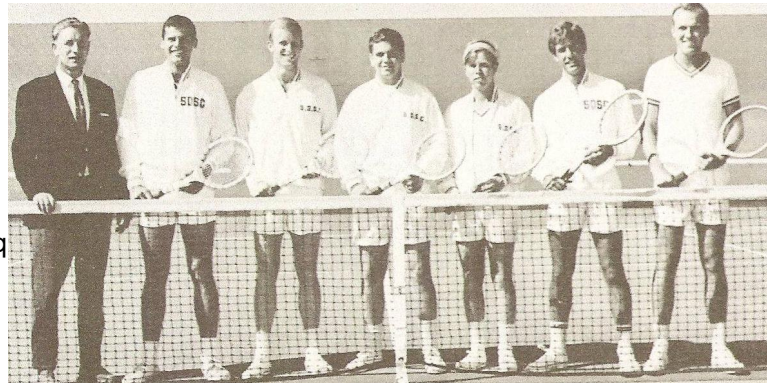


Durning

## 1960s Player, Coach Gains World Acclaim

attitude in the mineral exploration business. The odds against success are staggeringly negative. And if you don't have that persistence, determination, and the confidence that you're gonna be successful, you never will be.

Unlike Dobbs (Bogart), modern prospectors ride in four-wheel-drive vehicles. Durning is quick to point out that he and Hillemeier still like the hills and camp under the stars. To oldtimers, the companies who hire them are

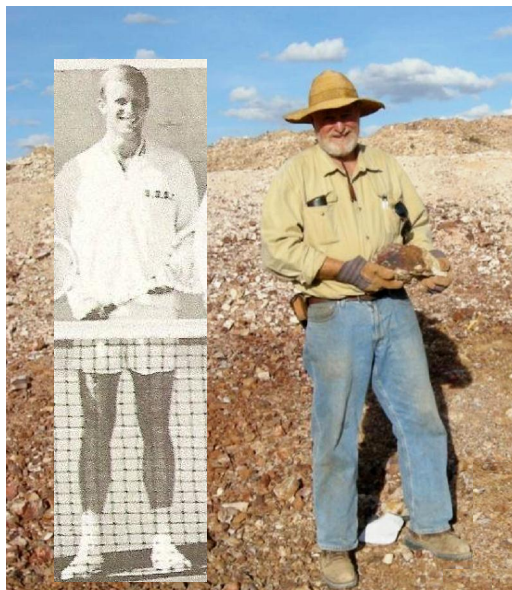


1967 Del Sud yearbook, Special Collections, San Diego State University Library  
**1967 AZTEC MATES:** Coach Al Olsen, Dennis Hannon, Perry Durning, Paul Robinson, Rich Williams, Bud Myers, Matt Jones.

grubstaking the pair. Durning said the discoveries have benefitted Mexican residents by creating jobs and tax revenues that help develop local communities, giving Mexican children a vision for the future.

"When we first entered the community," Durning said, "the men were sitting on street corners drinking beer with nothing to do. Now, he said, because of development projects, they've got health services, they've got

potable water, they've got communications. And most importantly, everybody who wants to work has got a good job.



Durning at SDSU, Camino Rojo in Mexico.

A Grossmont High School graduate who had reached the 1962 California Interscholastic Federation doubles final, Durning transferred to San Diego State from Cal Western, a local university now called Alliant International University.

Durning said he was welcomed to the Aztec tennis squad by George Ziegenfuss, the tennis and basketball coach, who anointed him as an assistant tennis coach, for which he was paid \$300, while he sat out a year of playing eligibility.

In time, Durning competed as the number one Aztec player. Among his practice partners was Valerie Ziegenfuss, the coach's daughter and already a top player. She later helped create the women's professional tennis tour.

## Aztec Coach Larry Willens Selected for SD Tennis Hall of Fame Induction

San Diego State volunteer tennis coach Larry Willens has been selected for induction by the San Diego Tennis Hall of Fame. He completed his 12th year as a volunteer coach at San Diego State last month. He joined the men's team in 2008 after 10 years as the volunteer Aztec women's coach.

The 2010 Hall of Fame inductees include Virginia Glass, community activist and former American Tennis Association President; Bob Perry, the retired La Jolla Tennis Club teaching professional; Bob Bacon, longtime coach of San Diego City College men's teams; and Patricia (Pat) Canning Todd, the 1947 French singles champion and



Larry Willens

Wimbledon doubles titlist. The induction is scheduled August 28 at Morley Field in San Diego.

Willens coached the San Diego Friars, led by Australia's Rod Laver, in the World Team Tennis seasons of 1976-78 and 1981-85. He later coached the Sacramento Capitals for three years.

As a patron of tennis, Willens has donated much of the furnishings and the locker rooms at the Aztec Tennis Center and is a contributor to Youth Tennis San Diego at the Barnes Tennis Center. He recently returned to coaching San Diegoan Abigail Spears on the WTA tour. He coaches Australia's Stephen Huss on the ATP men's tour.

## Aztec Men, Women Reverse Season Setbacks, but Fall in MWC Finals

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Kayla Duncan of TCU, ranked 113th in the country, defeated Aztec Julia Wais in a tense match, 6-1, 5-7, 7-6.

Two days later, Mattera said: "I am still trying to get over it." But looking to next season, when the entire team returns, he said: "The future does look bright."

The men started the year with a disastrous slump, losing ten of their first twelve matches. Then, after pulling themselves together, they won five matches in a row and pulled to the brink of upsetting 25th ranked BYU. The Aztecs lost 4-3 to the Cougars in Provo, Utah.

The men won seven of their eight final regular season matches, including victories over Utah, 5-2, in Salt Lake City and UNLV, 4-3, in San Diego. The team entered the conference tournament in Las Vegas ranked 62nd in the country and seeded second. At year's end, they were 50th.

Reaching the conference tournament final, they had won 11 of their 13 previous matches. The run began in late March with a 4-3 victory over Furman in their final match at the Blue Gray National College Tennis Classic in Birmingham, Ala.

Their only losses along the way were at 23rd ranked Pepperdine, 7-0, at Malibu, and the road match against Brigham Young.

In the tournament final, with the teams tied, 3-3, Christopher Price of TCU defeated Aztec Luis Rattenhuber, 7-6, 6-2, in the deciding singles match.

Aztec Volunteer Men's Coach Larry Willens said he was "very disappointed" by the team's loss in the tournament final. He acknowledged that the season had started badly, which he attributed to a "poor attitude"



Juan Gomez



Mat landolo

among some players. Willens said the team had held a mid-season meeting that "hooked off bad thinking, and turned the Aztecs into the best team in the (conference) tournament."

"They annihilated UNLV in the semi-finals," Willens said, calling it the Aztecs' best performance and most deserved victory of the year. But then, he said, several players "reverted" to early-season thinking in the final.

Aztec Juan Gomez was named Mountain West Player of the Year. He shared the award with Phillip Eilers of Utah. Gomez is the fourth Aztec men's competitor to win the honor. He follows Aztecs Alex Waske (2000), Oliver Maiberger (2001, 2002, 2003), and Markus Dickhardt (2007).

Gomez was undefeated in conference play, and won 16 of his 22 matches for the year. He was selected for the all-conference singles team, where he was joined by fellow Aztec Achim Vladimirschii, who was chosen as well for the All-Mountain West doubles team, paired with Aztec Giovanni Vaglietti. They ranked 87th in the nation. Gomez and Rattenhuber ranked 55th in the nation.

The NCAA invited five teams from the Mountain West Conference to the year-ending national championships: The TCU and BYU men and the TCU, UNLV, and Utah women.

Utah's Mat landolo, who started his coaching career with the Aztecs, won the 2010 Mountain West Women's Coach of the Year honor by leading his team to the regular-season title and gaining an at-large invitation to the NCAA Championships.

At Purdue University, landolo was Big 10 Conference Women's Coach of the Year in 1998 and 2003.

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[aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com](mailto:aztectennisreporter@yahoo.com).

John Martin  
Editor